

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

Claim 1 - 4. (canceled)

5. (currently amended): A method for producing fermented milk, which comprises reducing a concentration of dissolved oxygen ~~eonecentration~~ in a mix of raw materials for fermented milk at the start of fermentation to 5 ppm or less by substituti~~o~~ng the dissolved oxygen with an inert gas,; and carrying out fermentation at a fermentation temperature of from 30°C to 37°C.

6. (currently amended): The method for producing fermented milk according to claim 5, wherein the period of carrying out a-fermentation-time is shortened than a period of carrying out fermentation without reducing the concentration of dissolved oxygen time of a conventional method at the fermentation temperature.

7. (canceled)

8. (currently amended): The fermented milk produced by the method according to claim 5.,~~which has more excellent properties in smooth texture on tongue, mild taste and rich~~

~~taste than conventional fermented milk obtained by long term fermentation at low temperature, and a hardness with which a texture can be maintained at distribution stage.~~

9. (currently amended): The fermented milk produced by the method according to claim 6, which has more excellent properties in smooth texture on tongue, mild taste and rich taste than conventional fermented milk obtained by long term fermentation at low temperature, and a hardness with which a texture can be maintained at distribution stage.

10. (previously presented): A fermented milk, which has a penetration angle of 31° or less and a hardness of 40 g or more, wherein the hardness is an elasticity until break of the penetration angle curve obtained by a measurement of the penetration angle of a yogurt knife with a weight of 100 g using a neocurd meter, and the penetration angle is an indicator of smoothness.

11. (previously presented): The fermented milk produced by the method according to claim 5, which has a penetration angle of 31° or less and a hardness of 40 g or more, wherein the hardness is an elasticity until break of the penetration angle curve obtained by a measurement of the penetration angle of a yogurt knife with a weight of 100 g using a neocurd meter, and the penetration angle is an indicator of smoothness.

12. (previously presented): The fermented milk produced by the method according to claim 6, which has a penetration angle of 31° or less and a hardness of 40 g or more, wherein the hardness is an elasticity until break of the penetration angle curve obtained by a measurement

of the penetration angle of a yogurt knife with a weight of 100 g using a neocurd meter, and the penetration angle is an indicator of smoothness.

13. (new): The method according to claim 5, wherein the reduced concentration of dissolved oxygen is maintained during fermentation.